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**For Immediate Release**

## You've Got Mail! SRNS STEM Pal Program Links Experts and Local Students

**AIKEN, S.C.** – (April 21, 2026) – The long-lost art of letter writing is making a comeback at the Savannah River Site (SRS), where students are building real connections with professionals through the [STEM Pals](#) Program. This yearlong initiative pairs K-12 classrooms with Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) experts, giving students the chance to ask questions, explore career paths, and see the human side of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).



*Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) experts meet their STEM pals from the Cyber Academy of Excellence at Richmond County Technical Career Magnet School (RCTCM). From left: Angela Sneed, RCTCM CTAE Coordinator, Cyber Academy Program Administrator; Paul Smith, SRNS Network Security Team; Benjamin Jollie, SRNS Computer Security Engineer; Henry Bryant, SRNS Cyber Defense; and Cindy Hewitt, SRNS Education Outreach Specialist.*

Launched during the COVID-19 pandemic and revitalized in 2023 after reaching 1,000 students, the SRNS Education Outreach Program now engages an average of 500–600 students, 15–20 educators, and 10–15 volunteers annually. In FY25, the program paired 21 SRS STEM professionals with classrooms across Aiken, Columbia and Richmond counties.

“Our STEM Pals initiative makes it easy for employees to volunteer and broaden students’ range of career possibilities as they advance through school,” said Cindy Hewitt, SRNS Education Outreach Specialist.

### A Pipeline of Future Cyber Defenders

SRS relies on highly skilled cyber professionals to protect national security systems, critical infrastructure and nuclear materials. With cyber talent shortages growing nationwide, exposing students early to real-world cyber roles helps cultivate future analysts, engineers and incident responders for mission success.

This year, those lessons came to life for 40 high school students at the Cyber Academy of Excellence at Richmond County Technical Career Magnet ([RCTCM](#)) School. After months of correspondence, students met Benjamin Jollie, SRNS Computer Security Engineer; Henry Bryant, SRNS Cyber Defense; and Paul Smith, SRNS Network Security Team during the program’s annual reveal event.

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STEM Pals Javon Johnson, Zac Brown, Smith, Jollie, Bryant, Elijah Young and Mazio Frails.



RCTCM Cyber Academy of Excellence students listen to SRNS panelists during the reveal.

“Students need help connecting the dots,” said Smith. “When young people feel free to ask questions, they discover that cybersecurity isn’t mysterious, but meaningful, approachable, and within their reach. For 75 years, SRS has shaped this community. If we want the next generation to carry that work forward, we must show up for them now.”

Cyber Academy of Excellence Instructor Datinya Caviness praised the partnership for giving students direct access to industry professionals at a pivotal moment in their academic journey.

“The pen-pal format created sustained, authentic relationships. Unlike a single guest speaker or one-time assignment, students had the opportunity to build rapport over time,” she said. “As the semester progressed, students became more confident asking technical questions, requesting advice, and challenging themselves to learn more so they could better understand their Pal’s work. Several students who were unsure about cybersecurity began expressing strong interest in cyber defense, network security or incident response.”

Bruce Page, SRNS Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer, said, “Programs like this provide a powerful intrinsic reward for our cyber professionals, who take great pride in mentoring the next generation of technologists. By breaking down concepts such as threat detection, system hardening, and secure digital habits, our experts help students build early awareness of the security mindset that is essential to protecting our operations.”

To spark a pen pal relationship with an SRNS expert, educators can fill out an [interest form](#). To see the impact firsthand, watch the [2024 STEM Pal reveal](#) with Jackson STEM Magnet Middle School.

*Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.*

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